



# VOYAGEUR TRAIL NEWS

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THE OPENING OF THE THESSALON SECTION 1978 10 01

## OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE THESSALON SECTION

Sunday, Oct. 1, 1978 was a very special day for the Thessalon Voyageur Trail Club, marking the official opening of a large section of its walking trail between Rydal Bank and Iron Bridge. The day was made possible by the work of a small group of Thessalon and area workers and the assistance of the Sault Ste. Marie Club in opening up the western reaches of the trail. About 40 people showed up for the official opening featuring a ribbon cutting ceremony by the reeve of Thessalon Township, Donald McKinnon.

The site chosen for the ribbon cutting ceremony was on one of the most interesting and spectacular sections of the trail, located at the Bridgeland River crossing at the Shaw Dam. This dam is one of the most unique in Ontario being a solid masonry structure spanning a narrow defile in the river valley between rugged granite cliffs. It was built in 1931 on the site of an old wooden logging dam established to facilitate driving saw logs down the river almost 100 years ago. The original structure was known locally as the lower MacArthur Dam.

After coffee and doughnuts and the ribbon cutting ceremony, presided over by the president of the Thessalon Club, Jack MacDonald, the group was guided across the dam by the trail captain, Don Fulton, over a section of the trail that terminates at the Shaw Road. This section of the trail leads southward over a rather precipitous cliff overlooking the lake created by the dam. It was used as a water reserve for the old power house at Little Rapids. Seventy-five years ago if one had looked down on the area where the lake now stretches to the west, one would have seen a broad flat sand plain, dotted with pine stumps from which a rich harvest of white pine logs had been recently cut. In the middle of the plain stood a set of log buildings called the Horse Camps, near the river.

The trail to the south winds down from the bluff across a flat area where beaver have created a series of dams on a small stream. This is the area where a young girl became lost in 1880, during the early years of settlement of Kirkwood Township. It was her first and last day at the little log home her father had built in the forest because she succumbed there in spite of the efforts of searchers to rescue her.

Large pine stumps along the trail that have withstood the passage of time for many decades are mute evidence of the magnificent trees that once grew along much of this section of the trail.

The Autumn colours added greatly to the pleasure of traversing this interesting area and the visitors from Sault Ste. Marie, Blind River, and those who attended the official opening from the Thessalon Area all experienced another enjoyable day on a part of the Voyageur Trail.

Editor's Note: While news items are not credited, many readers will recognize the style of the above from other works, such as Shantymen and Sodbusters, by the same author.



THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE VOYAGEUR TRAIL ASSOCIATION

1978

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Voyageur Trail Association and the Voyageur Trail have both progressed considerably in the last year and you should all be proud to be part of the drive that has brought it about. Much of our progress you may already be aware of, but I'll touch on a few highlights.

We have another new club this year, at Schreiber, on the north shore of Lake Superior. There are about 45 km of shoreline trail already built between Terrace Bay and Rainbow Falls Provincial Park, under the auspices of the Ministry of Natural Resources. I have written to the Ministry to ask that they turn over this trail to the V.T.A. so that the Schreiber Club can extend and maintain it. The reply so far is encouraging.

Although it's a long way from the Sault to Schreiber, we have to get there somehow, and a good start has been made by a small group of dedicated Saulteaux members, under the leadership of Ernie Pringle and Tom Allinson. That "group" frequently consisted of solely the latter two gentlemen - they deserve our deepest appreciation. Their efforts have taken the trail from Gros Cap to the Lake Superior shoreline near the top of Prince Township.

Of course, you all know the Thessalon Section was completed this summer, with the help of 4 students working under a Young Canada Works Project. I don't need to say anything more about that, for you will hear the highlights of that effort from the horse's mouth, so to speak. That effort, by the way, has extended the trail down to the town of Iron Bridge.

The Rainbow Section is expanding with the help of the Espanola Highschool Outers Club, under George Morrison, our Sudbury Club members and some Toronto Bruce Trail Club members, under the leadership of Gordon Thompson. The trail now extends from the highway at the Willisville Tower north to Bass Lake, cleared and blazed with a few short gaps in the blazing - a distance of about 18 km.

Ontario Hiking Day was successful as far as the V.T.A. was concerned, with a total of 176 people out, so far reported, and with 2 clubs yet to report.

I am happy to report (because it is a relief to me) that the V.T.A. has a publicity committee newly formed, under the chairmanship of Mrs. Judy Falkins.

Our Guidebook Committee, under the chairmanship of Bob Andrews, is making progress, and I'll call on Bob to tell you about it shortly.